# Growth Mindsets and Emotions in SLA; A Literature Review

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## Introduction

When learning a new language, a multitude of factors can interplay within the acquisition of this new language. Such factors include socioeconomic background or environment, age, personal history, previously known languages, and one's mindset (Riasati & Rahimi, 2018, pp. 1-2). Through second language acquisition (SLA), these factors can serve as possible hindrances or advantages for language learners. In the field of SLA, the mindsets of language learners can be modified or influenced in various ways to attempt to increase their overall performance in their SLA (Lou & Noel, 2019, pp. 1-2). Within the studies of SLA, factors such as language speaking anxiety, language speaking confidence, language enjoyment, and overall performance can be measured as indicators of an effective language learning process. To influence these factors, interventions can potentially transform mindsets of second language learners. For example, various researchers have concluded that mindset can predict L2 speaking and, interestingly, reading outcomes and performance (Khajavy & Pourtahmasb, 2021, p. 2). Additionally, manipulative steps such as the face-to-face intercultural exchange between English learning students of similar cultures resulted in increased confidence levels of English learners (Saito et al., 2020, p. 225). Our research aims to evaluate the different factors that can influence growth mindsets and improve the overall language acquisition in second language learners.

## Methods

In order to empirically evaluate the effective methods of manipulating mindsets of second language learners and their effects on language acquisition, researchers engaged in a holistic literature review of existing studies on these types of interventions. Researchers utilized forty-nine peer-reviewed articles; topics included foreign language speaking anxiety, self-confidence, second language (L2) speaking confidence, mindsets and language mindsets.

## Findings

Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA) is "the worry and negative emotional reaction aroused when learning or using a second language", (MacIntyre, 1999, pp. 24-45). Besides anxiety, stress, shame, fear, and lack of motivation might affect the language learning process. While individuals with foreign language anxiety are more reluctant to speak, it is still possible succeed in speaking their target language. In fact, studies have shown that having self-confidence, growth mindsets, and a positive environment are among factors that can help those who struggle with language anxiety (Lou & Noels, 2019; Tridinanti, 2018).

A growth mindset is one of the most important factors which may have an influence in learning a new language. Growth mindsets are often seen as the "grit" that one has when learning a language and is simply defined as a positive and motivated attitude in second language acquisition. Various studies have shown that a growth mindset is indicative of the efficacy of second language learners (Zarrinabadi et al., 2021). Furthermore, negative emotions are often negatively associated with a growth mindset (e.g., Ozdemir & Papi, 2021)) and thus also negatively associated with language/reading proficiency (e.g., Lou & Noels, 2020).

When attempting to improve L2 learners' speaking confidence and language speaking confidence, a multitude of manipulative factors have been tested to determine possible effective methods of doing so. Self-confidence has been shown to have a moderate positive correlation with speaking achievement (Tridinanti, 2018, p. 39) and L2 willingness to communicate, and a negative correlation with L2 speaking anxiety (Aoyama and Takahashi, 2020, p. 710). Consequently, strategies like exposing language learners to fellow L2 speakers of similar cultures (Saito and Perkins, 2020, p. 225), and the use of meta-cognitive strategies that allow students to understand their cognitive methods and strategies when learning a L2 (Forbes & Fisher, 2018, p. 178) can improve language learners' self-confidence.

## Conclusion

When discussing SLA, it is important to understand anxiety and how it can affect L2 learners' ability to communicate. "Defined as the feeling of tension and apprehension" (MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994, p. 284), anxiety is multifaceted and can be applied to many situations that require L2 learners to communicate in that given language. With such a notion, it is important to develop growth mindsets to overcome language anxiety. Outside of developing growth mindsets, self-confidence is a key factor in improving language proficiency in L2 learners who struggle with SLA. Multiple studies have indicated that there is a negative correlation between self-confidence and speaking anxiety (Tridinanti, 2018, p. 35). Consequently, having self-confidence also may increase L2 learners' willingness to speak, another factor that aids in language proficiency. Ultimately, the language learning process may include a variety of emotions which may inhibit L2 learners from communicating in the target language. Developing a growth mindset and enhancing self-confidence are among the key factors that might improve the overall language proficiency in L2 learners who struggle with the language learning process.

## References